

MEMORANDUM OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
HELD IN WASHINGTON, D. C., MARCH 23, 1935.

The seventh meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts during the fiscal year 1935, was held in its office in the Navy Department Building on Saturday, March 23, 1935. The following members were present:

Mr. Moore, Chairman,
Mr. Swartwout,
Mr. Clarke,
Mr. Lawrie,
Mr. Savage,
Mr. Coolidge,

also Mr. H. P. Caemmerer,

Executive Secretary and Administrative Officer.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a. m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETING: The Minutes of the Meeting of the Commission held on February 23, 1935, were approved. Mr. Lawrie suggested that a letter written by Mr. Swartwout in February concerning the models for the sculpture of the Labor Department-Interstate Commerce Commission buildings be included in the Minutes.

2. GASOLINE SERVICE STATION, MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE AND SECOND STREET, N. E.: Under date of February 28, 1935, the Building Inspector of the District of Columbia submitted application No. 383 with plans from the Gulf Refining Company for an enlarged Gasoline Service Station at Massachusetts Avenue and Second Street, N. E., where the Company has been operating a small station since 1924. This establishment being near the United States Capitol building, the matter was brought to the attention of Mr. David Lynn, Architect of the Capitol, who attended the meeting of the Commission in company with Mr. H. D. Rouzer, Assistant, for a conference on the subject.

Mr. Lynn said the Company has the right under the Zoning Regulations of the District to operate a gas station at this location. Mr. Lynn said that he had talked with the Vice President, Mr. Garner, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr. Byrns, both of whom are members of the Commission for the Enlargement of the Capitol Grounds, as to the matter, and they said that "as long as the station is already there it would not be right not to let them improve the station".

Mr. Swartwout and Mr. Coolidge inspected the design and considered it unsatisfactory. It was thereupon decided that the Gulf Refining Company should be requested to secure an architect to design a satisfactory building, and the Building Inspector was notified accordingly. Mr. Swartwout called attention to the good type of service station which Mr. Clarke designed for the Bronx Parkway.

Mr. Moore told Mr. Lynn that the Commission of Fine Arts has been much concerned as to the great number of gas stations in all parts of the city (between 600 and 700 in number) and that the Commission would like to see them segregated to particular areas. Mr. Lynn agreed that this would be a good thing if it could be done. Mr. Moore called attention to the fact that along Fifth Avenue in New York City gas stations are allowed only at particular points. Mr. Clarke said this was done under the building code which does not permit the storage of large quantities of gas and oil in some parts of the down town area. Mr. Lynn thought the consent of citizens for the location of gas stations ought to be abolished as the citizens often ask exorbitant prices.

Mr. Lynn was asked about the proposed service station at Second Street, Constitution and Louisiana Avenues, and he said that the Vice President had refused to allow the company to have an entrance from Louisiana Avenue, and it seems that because of the lack of this entrance the company does not want to

go ahead with the project. Mr. Lynn said a number of members of Congress objected to a gas station at that location, although he thought Mr. Heaton had made a good design for it. Mr. Moore said the Commission is concerned with the appearance of gas stations, particularly in the Shipstead-Luce Act area, but has no way to keep them out where the Zoning regulations permit their erection.

Mr. Moore objected to the all day parking of cars by great numbers of Maryland and Virginia people in the streets of Washington and the all night parking of cars by the citizens of Washington. Mr. Clarke remarked that there is not a city in the United States which has so many parked cars in the streets. Mr. Moore asked Mr. Lynn who there is at the Capitol with whom it would be possible to take up the matter of parking, and Mr. Lynn said he thought it should be taken up with the Speaker.

Mr. F. D. Porter, representing the Gulf Refining Company, called later in the day, and Mr. Moore explained to him the views of the Commission as to the project and the importance of securing an architect to design the building. His attention was called to the design of a service station near Alexandria along the Mount Vernon Highway.

3. UNION SQUARE. Mr. Lynn expressed interest in the Union Square development and said he hoped the project could be gotten well under way while Congress is here. Mr. Lynn was informed that the National Park Service was pushing the project and that at the meeting of the Commission today a design was to be submitted involving certain details in the plan. This plan was thereupon submitted by Mr. Malcolm Kirkpatrick, landscape architect of the National Park Service.

Captain Howard of Mr. Olmsted's office was also present.

Mr. Kirkpatrick explained features of the plan, showing dark marks to indicate trees in the Union Square area that have disappeared; red marks to indicate trees which are to be removed immediately and white marks to indicate trees which will be transplanted from Union Square. This plan was considered satisfactory to the Commission. Upon the recommendation of Mr. Clarke, the tree moving plan, NCP 1585, Sheet No. 1, was approved. Sheet No. 2, of Plan 1585, was approved with the recommendation to have planting back of the Grant Monument between the Monument and First Street and with the proviso that a supplementary plan be prepared to be submitted to Mr. Clarke for approval.

Mr. Kirkpatrick said that the existing sewer across Union Square is going to be demolished and rebuilt at a lower level.

The question of traffic immediately west of the Capitol was discussed and it was agreed that the traffic arrangement provided for the "island" in the Union Square plan, to run counterclockwise, was satisfactory. Mr. Clarke pointed out that the Mall drives are one-way drives, leading to and from the Capitol.

Mr. Lynn asked if the marble of the Grant Monument should not be given attention, and Mr. Moore replied that this should be done. He called attention to a letter received recently from Dr. Briggs, Director of the Bureau of Standards, on the durability of stone. (Exhibit A)

Several other projects under development near the Capitol were then discussed. Mr. Moore said he was pleased with the new U. S. Conservatory that has been completed on the south side of Maryland Avenue, adjacent to the Capitol, and Mr. Lynn said he was glad to hear this. Also he said his office is cooperating with Dr. Putnam, Librarian of Congress, in regard to the building of the new annex. Mr. Lynn invited the Commission to inspect the new United

States Supreme Court Building, and this was done by the Commission during the afternoon. Attention was called to the need of planting for the grounds. The existing U. S. Supreme Court Chamber in the Capitol, he said, is to be retained as a historical room; although the office space used by the Justices will be taken up for use as committee rooms by members of Congress. The busts in the Court Chamber will remain there at least for the present. Mr. Moore suggested the library of the Supreme Court building for them.

Mr. Lynn said some Congressmen want black and white tile put in the House corridors. Mr. Moore thought it would be better to leave the corridor floors just as they are as the plain surface and the Doric columns go well together. About half of the statues in Statuary Hall have been removed to various corridors of the House of Representatives, as the Commission had recommended.

Attention was called to a plan to widen Independence Avenue, on the south side of the Capitol Grounds. Mr. Clarke objected to any widening which would take off any part of the Capitol Grounds and he mentioned the fact that the old House Office Building is not set back far enough on the south side of the Avenue to make it possible to widen the Avenue near the Capitol. Mr. Moore suggested that something be done to improve the appearance of the grounds south of the Capitol.

Mr. Moore asked about the extension of East Capitol Street. Mr. Lynn said there is no question that it has to be widened but the matter will have to be studied out very carefully.

The desirability of projecting the central portion of the Capitol Building eastward to be on a line with the House and Senate wings/ ^{was discussed.} Mr. Lynn said the subject has been pending in Congress for many years, and recently a hearing was held on a bill introduced by Senator Keyes (S 190); also that plans for

such extension were recommended by Thomas U. Walter in 1864 and later by Carrere and Hastings. (The Senate passed the bill April 9, 1935.)

4. SAN DIEGO EXPOSITION BUILDING: The Department of State through Mr. James C. Dunn, Chief of the Protocol Division, submitted a design for the Government building to be built at San Diego. It was designed by Richard S. Requa, supervising architect of the exposition. The design was sent to Mr. Howells, who reported by telegram as follows:

Charleston, S. C., March 15, 1935.

The Commission of Fine Arts,
Navy Department Building,
Washington, D. C.

I have been studying prints sent of Government building for San Diego Exposition. As far as the elevation is concerned the general mass and composition seemed to me dignified and sufficient. If, however, it is designated as a lesson in Maya architecture as seems the intent then as a presentation of Maya principles of composition it is inexact but probably there is little intention in this direction.

John Mead Howells.

Also Mr. Moore asked Mr. James E. Fraser as to the ornament on the building which resembles the Mayan. Mr. Fraser replied that the ornament was flat and uninteresting; that the Mayan architecture is very much bolder. He advised that the ornament should be modeled before attempting to put it on the building. Mr. Fraser said that this is the way it was done on the Mayan buildings.

The design of the building was considered by Mr. Swartwout and Mr. Coolidge and they thought that so far as the general scheme was concerned, it was satisfactory and they were quite pleased with it.

The building is to have a frontage of 220 feet; will be 150 feet wide and 70 feet high. It will be built of cast stone and finished in stucco. It is to cost \$125,500.

Mr. Lawrie gave particular attention to the sculptural ornament. He believed the frieze should have a larger unit. He said the ornament on the pylons suggests Yucatan whereas that over the central door is Peruvian. Mr. Lawrie felt that the ornament did not have to be of the true Aztec type and probably it was not intended so to be. He said he was doing something like it now and found it very hard not to copy the Aztec exactly and yet get the effect.

Mr. Lawrie wondered if it would be necessary to keep the chimney-like projections at the top of the entrance pylons. Mr. Coolidge thought the building did not need them and the Commission concluded it would be better without them.

Mr. Joseph W. Hiscox, Federal Commissioner of the Exposition, was present as was also Mr. Hal Hotchkiss, representing the San Diego Exposition, with both of whom the Commission discussed the design. It was suggested to Mr. Hotchkiss that the architect try to eliminate the upper windows in the office space and provide lighting by skylight. It was also suggested that the planting should cover the lower windows. Mr. Hotchkiss said the planting had been put in nine months ago and the way plants grow in Southern California, it is now high enough to screen the windows on the side. For coloring the ornament, Mr. Hotchkiss said that they are going to use a concrete paint that is being used with considerable success in Southern California; it is a paint which goes well into the concrete. The design was approved generally and the Secretary of State was notified accordingly. (Exhibit B)

Mr. Hotchkiss said he was returning to San Diego immediately and would bring the suggestions of the Commission to the attention of the architect. Congress has provided an appropriation of \$350,000 for the Government partici-

pation in the exposition. The building is to be permanent and will be used as an auditorium after the exposition. The exposition will open May 29, 1935, and this building is to be completed by that time.

5. BRIDGES FOR THE AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT BUILDING: Mr. Louis Simon, Supervising Architect, submitted revised sketches, Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4 for bridges for the Agriculture Department buildings, with letter of March 13, 1935, as follows:

March 13, 1935.

Sir:

Reference is made to the proposed bridges to connect the Administration and South Buildings of the Department of Agriculture, this City, and to your letter of February 26, recommending restudy of the designs submitted for consideration of the Commission.

Accordingly four alternative studies have been prepared and are being submitted to you under separate cover for comment and advice.

Respectfully,
(Signed) L. A. Simon,
Supervising Architect.

Prints of the design were submitted to Mr. Swartwout and Mr. Howells and Mr. Coolidge. Mr. Howells reported:

March 20, 1935.

Dear Mr. Moore:

"I agree entirely that the design with the grill is the best. There is one thing that could be improved, the Arch Voussoirs and the Vertical Support meet badly. While the Voussoirs must be jointed they should be as obliterated as possible and the rustication on the vertical should be omitted. If you will glance at the drawing No. 1 you will see that the second bridge in the distance has a better effect for just this reason."

Very truly yours,
(Signed) J. M. Howells.

The Commission considered the sketches. Mr. Swartwout and Mr. Coolidge felt that the sketches did not present a satisfactory solution of the problem.

Mr. Clarke talked with Simon by telephone about the sketches and asked why the sidewalk opening was not centered in the space between the curb and the building. Mr. Simon replied that the sidewalk is a variable quantity and is wider in one place than in another. He said that their aim was to keep as much masonry as possible between the big arch and the little arch and that the sidewalk could be moved later if necessary. Mr. Moore said that this situation was due to the slant in the Mall axis.

After thorough consideration of the matter the Commission decided that the two small arches would create a nuisance and that the bridge should consist of a single span. The Commission reported to Mr. Simon that a single arch steel bridge, therefore, should be built. (Exhibit C)

6. FOLGER PARK: Mr. Malcolm Kirkpatrick, landscape architect of the National Park Service, submitted a plan for Folger Park along North Carolina Avenue between 2nd and 3rd Streets, S. E. Upon the recommendation of Mr. Clarke this plan was approved by the Commission, subject to the submission of a planting plan.

7. LAFAYETTE PARK: A plan was submitted by Mr. Kirkpatrick for Lafayette Park. Mr. Clarke suggested a number of improvements in the planting and in the arrangement of the paths, saying that he did not favor hard and straight lines as people tend to cut across. A revised planting plan is to be submitted to the Commission. Mr. Moore suggested comfort stations for all the larger parks but not for Lafayette Park as it is too near the White House.

8. NEW INTERIOR DEPARTMENT BUILDING LANDSCAPE PLAN: Mr. Kirkpatrick submitted drawing No. NCP 1587, showing the proposed landscape treatment around the new Interior Department Building between C and E Streets, 18th and 19th Streets. The plan was prepared in collaboration with Mr. Waddy Wood. The plan was approved

with the understanding that sycamores would be planted in place of elms, which are subject to the Dutch elm blight. Mr. Kirkpatrick asked about the size of the trees and Mr. Clarke advised a tree having a caliper not over six inches.

9. BOUNDARY BRIDLE PATH BRIDGE: The following memorandum was received from Mr. Kirkpatrick, dated March 5, 1935:

The accompanying blue print No. NCP 1542-B, is of the architectural drawing for this bridge located adjacent to the Maryland Boundary Line in the upper end of Rock Creek Park. I would appreciate your forwarding this to Mr. Gilmore Clarke so that he may review it.

It is intended that the piers and abutments shall be of native stone masonry similar to that used on the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway Bridges. The structure of the bridge is designed to be reminiscent of timber construction. The sills (which will house the roller bearings provided for expansion) and the face of the girders are to be of concrete so formed as to show a natural wood grain. The surfaces thus treated will be stained. The hand rail is to be of wood. We feel that this type of bridge will be interesting and effective in this rather rugged situation. It provides a structure adequate to clear the unusual flood levels and such as to be inconspicuous in the surrounding woodlands.

Mr. Clarke inspected the design and upon his recommendation the Commission approved it.

10. TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY DINNER: Mr. Moore stated that the Century Club had reserved the small dining room for the dinner to be given May 17, by the members and former members of the Commission of Fine Arts on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Commission. It is expected about 25 persons will be present. The members agreed that the expenses of the dinner would not exceed \$5.00 per person.

11. UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT BUILDING: The Commission visited the Supreme Court Building and were shown through by Mr. David Lynn, architect of the Capitol, and Mr. H. D. Rouzer, assistant. The building is nearing completion and is to be dedicated next fall. The exterior is of white Vermont marble

and the interior largely of Alabama marble. There is an elegance about the building that made the members feel that it is the best among the buildings designed by Mr. Gilbert. The Commission admired the sculptural frieze by Mr. Weinman in the Supreme Court room.

12. LEE HIGHWAY, ROUTE D: Under date of March 16, 1935, the Secretary received the following memorandum from Mr. John Nolen, City Planner of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission:

I am attaching a set of the plans for the Lee Boulevard prepared by Mr. Spelman as agreed at our conference on March 9, together with copy of Mr. Spelman's letter to me.

These plans show the relation between the location proposed by the Bureau of Public Roads about a year ago, and the location for which the Virginia Highway Department has obtained options. We have also shown right-of-way widths as at present proposed by the Virginia Highway Department.

I have sent Mr. Hubbard a set and asked him if he can be here the week-end of the 23d to meet with Major Clarke at that time.

Mr. Spelman's letter reads as follows:

March 9, 1935.

Mr. J. Nolen, Jr.,
City Planner,
National Capital Parks and Planning Commission,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Nolen:

There are sent you herewith two prints showing the center line as originally projected by us on the proposed approach to be built by the State to the Arlington Memorial Bridge. There is also shown on each of these prints the center line as proposed by the State in their latest set of plans.

The alignment as proposed by the State is not satisfactory in its entirety, in my opinion. The part which is particularly objectionable is that part from where the road crosses the brow of the hill looking down on Washington up to about where it joins the trolley tracks.

It is proposed to make a further study of this with a view to making further suggestions to the State for a satisfactory alignment.

I would be glad to have any comments and suggestions from Mr. Clarke and Mr. Hubbard.

Very truly yours,
(Signed) H. J. Spelman,
District Engineer.

The Secretary stated that he had sent the print to Mr. Clarke at his office in New York. Mr. Clarke said that the plan had not been brought to his attention. Thereupon a copy of it was secured from the Bureau of Public Roads, and it was agreed to inspect Route D during the afternoon. Accordingly the Commission in company with Mr. Nolen and Mr. Thomas Settle, Secretary of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, drove first by way of the proposed southern route on the south side of Arlington Cemetery and thence over the Lee Highway west of Arlington to Four Mile Run bridge. The return trip was made by way of the north side of Arlington Cemetery.

Mr. Clarke noted the undesirable curve proposed by the State of Virginia in Route D between stations 70 and 64 and on inspecting the locality, he expressed the opinion that it was bad planning, that there is no sense in running the road along a hill. It was agreed that the Bureau of Public Roads should make further study of the alignment and that an effort should be made to get a 200-foot right-of-way all along Route D. Mr. Clarke agreed that a revised plan as prepared by the Bureau of Public Roads would be acceptable to him.

The Secretary stated that this matter is coming before the Zoning Commission of Arlington County on Wednesday, March 27, when the question of a setback for Route D, reducing the building restriction line from 60 to 25 feet, will be considered.

(At the meeting held on March 27, the Zoning Commission of Arlington County decided to make no change in the setback of Route D, and the Bureau of Public Roads requested the Virginia State Highway Commission to get a 200-foot right-of-way over all of Route D in accordance with a new plan they are preparing, taking out the bad curve, to which objection was made.)

13. FORT DUPONT: Mr. Clarke in company with Mr. Nolen and Mr. Settle of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission visited Fort Dupont to lay out a roadway for the proposed Fort Drive by way of Fort Dupont. A preliminary layout of the road was agreed to.

14. BIENNIAL EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN OIL PAINTINGS, CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART: The Commission were invited to visit the Corcoran Gallery to inspect the Biennial Exhibition of Paintings, opening that day. There are 428 paintings on exhibition, the work of 353 artists from all parts of the United States. There are 85 more paintings on exhibition than at any previous exhibition.

The Commission adjourned at 5:30 p. m.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

BUREAU OF STANDARDS

WASHINGTON

ADDRESS REPLY TO
BUREAU OF STANDARDS

DWK:SLB

March 11, 1935.

IN YOUR REPLY
REFER TO FILE NO.

IX-9/Irs

Dr. Charles Moore, Chairman,
National Commission of Fine Arts,
Navy Building,
Washington, D.C.

Subject: Durability of Masonry.

Dear Dr. Moore:

This is to acknowledge your letter of March 4 concerning the durability of marble, granite, limestone, etc. of Government buildings and monuments in Washington, D.C.

Durability is an important consideration in selecting materials for monumental structures which are expected to endure for centuries, but in the cases of buildings that become obsolete within one century, we believe that most of the materials now used in the Government buildings of Washington will prove satisfactory. Various groups of buildings have already been allocated to certain types of stone by reason of economic or aesthetic considerations so it is hardly feasible to make radical departures in types of stone within these groups.

We agree that there is a need for improvement in methods of selecting materials for durability and perhaps much can be done by construction methods to add to endurance of the stone. A good example of the effect of construction methods on durability is the first 150 feet of the Washington Monument. Examples of inadequate means of selection are found in the Grant Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. A photograph of the Grant Monument pedestal is inclosed which shows serious cracking in several marble blocks while others are apparently sound. Photographs of three other structures are inclosed which show more or less serious disintegration for other marbles, due also to improper selection.

Methods of determining durability are receiving serious study at this Bureau by laboratory methods supplemented by field observations, and we are led to believe that there are many phases of stone deterioration aside from the commonly accepted

Exhibit A

March 11, 1935.

agencies of weathering. Apparently most deposits of stone are lacking in uniformity to the extent that tests on a few small samples may fall short of giving all the desired information on the large amount that goes into a building.

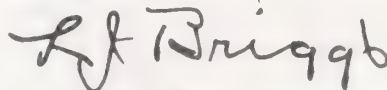
Granite is commonly considered to be most durable type of stone and most of our studies have confirmed this belief. However, there are instances near at hand which show that it deteriorates appreciably under some conditions. This may be observed in the Library of Congress building, the base of the Senate Office building, and the Union Station. Possibly structural methods could be devised to overcome this to a considerable extent.

Limestones are much more porous than the marbles, and are less resistant to frost action. Both are subject to surface weathering due to the solvent action of rain water. This kind of weathering results in roughening the surface and gradual obliteration of carvings, inscriptions, etc. Laboratory studies indicate that marble should prove to be more durable than limestone but as indicated above, much care has to be exercised in selecting marble.

While we are hardly in accord with the slogan adopted by the cement manufacturers -- "Concrete for Permanence" -- we are certain that if concrete is to be used only as a framework for vines or veneer for stones, it will outlast any other framework. It is our impression that the oldest piece of masonry existing in Washington is made of concrete, namely, a section of a concrete aqueduct built by the Romans, now in the Smithsonian Institute.

According to the information available on the three types of stone extensively used in Washington, granite may be rated highest, marble next, and limestone third. The deterioration of granite in the Library of Congress, Senate Office and Union Station buildings is probably not serious, but it detracts somewhat from the appearance. In most buildings, even many of the monumental class, we believe interior obsolescence will determine the useful life rather than durability of the facing materials.

Respectfully,



Lyman J. Briggs, Director.

Inclosures

C O P Y

March 23, 1935.

Dear Mr. Stodd:

March 23, 1935.

The Commission of Fine Arts at their meeting on March 23, 1935, considered carefully the many sketches you have presented for the Agricultural Department Building, and have reached these conclusions:

Sir:

The Commission of Fine Arts at their meeting today considered the design submitted by the Department of State for the Federal Building to be erected at San Diego for the exposition. The Commission approve the design in general.

The architect members of the Commission, as also the sculptor member, made a few suggestions to Mr. Hal G. Hotchkiss of San Diego, representing the Exposition authorities as to the design.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:
Very respectfully yours,

(Signed) Charles Moore,
Chairman.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

Very truly yours,
(Signed) Charles Moore,
Chairman.

Mr. Louis B. Mumford,
Superintendent,
Treasury Department,
Washington, D. C.

EXHIBIT B

EXHIBIT C

C O P Y

March 25, 1935.

Dear Mr. Simon:

The Commission of Fine Arts at their meeting on March 23, 1935, considered carefully the many sketches you have presented for the Agricultural Department Bridges, and have reached these conclusions:

The elimination of the central pier, desirable as it may be to prevent an obstruction in the street, plunges the situation into a much more serious complication by creating between the buildings and the curb a pier which makes necessary a passageway dangerous to pedestrians and inviting to nuisances. It is unnecessary to stress or even discuss this question. The mere statement is so obvious as to make argument unnecessary.

If, then, there is to be a single arch that arch should be from building to building, leaving open and clear the entire width of the street between building lines.

This would force a resort to a bridge of steel and glass, which is frankly a bridge, and which can be made light and airy, serving its purpose in a direct and simple fashion.

The designs for stone bridges, if carried out, would interpose heavy, cumbersome structures which cannot bridge the architectural gap between the two diverse buildings.

For reasons of safety, good order and for architectural reasons as well the Commission reluctantly but decidedly advise the frank, straightforward treatment of the crossings by lightly designed steel arches having a maximum of light. The Commission would welcome from you a sketch upon the lines indicated above.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Very truly yours,
(Signed) Charles Moore,
Chairman.

Mr. Louis Simon,
Supervising Architect,
Treasury Department,
Washington, D. C.

EXHIBIT C

